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The North Carolina New Schools Project - INNOVATOR - Sept. 6, 2011

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News About Secondary School Innovation | newschoolsproject.org

September 6, 2011

Welcome to INNOVATOR, an update on secondary school change from the North Carolina New Schools Project. Our newsletter is designed to inform practitioners, policymakers, and friends of public education on innovation, research and success stories from secondary schools. Feel free to [contact us](#), provide feedback and suggest article ideas.

Scaling innovation helps more students in NC



Dana Diesel Wallace
NCNSP Vice President
School Development

More students in North Carolina will benefit this year from innovative approaches to teaching and learning that are now common practice in several dozen cutting-edge high schools that are among the state's top performing high schools.

After six years helping to launch and develop more than 100 pioneering high schools across the state, the North Carolina New Schools Project will be broadening its reach this year in a number of existing schools wanting to adopt the same kinds of transformative [design principles](#) that have helped boost student outcomes. Those include powerful teaching and learning,

strong personalization, shared leadership among administrators and teachers and a singular focus by all professionals on student success.

The lessons these schools have learned are valuable not only for smaller, break-the-mold schools like themselves, but also for traditional secondary schools, small and big, and for entire districts. A common instructional framework that stresses active student engagement in every class works with all students, whether they attend an early college high school or a comprehensive high school with more than 1,000 students. Creating a culture with college- and work-readiness at its core should be an imperative for every school in North Carolina in the 21st century. Setting high expectations and supporting all students to reach them needs to be the direction for all schools.

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[New early colleges open](#)

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Graduation rates signal strong results

Graduation rates for black male and low-income students in NCNSP-affiliated schools in 2011 were above state averages for both groups and above the state's overall graduation rate of 77.7 percent for all students.

NC early colleges grow in numbers, popularity



Angela Polk-Jones, principal of UNCG early college, with students Hajji Johnson and Cayla Grossman Orr

The addition this fall of three new early college high schools in North Carolina brings to 74 the total number of the schools open across the state - a testament to both the innovative schools' effectiveness and growing popularity.

In all, an estimated 14,000 students have enrolled in the newly-styled schools, which blend high school and college and are aimed at students often under-represented in college, including those from families with low incomes or whose parents may not have attended college. Early college is now a high school option for students in 65 of the state's 100 counties.

North Carolina continues to lead the nation in the development of early colleges, with about a third of the pioneering schools in the Tar Heel state. The 74 schools operate through partnerships among local school districts, community colleges or universities, the N.C. Department of Public Instruction and the North Carolina New Schools Project.

The [three new schools](#) are helping to meet student demand in districts where early colleges have already proven to be a popular option. Cumberland County has added an early college with a focus on international studies. In Guilford County, UNC-Greensboro is hosting an early college with a health science theme. Wake County students now have the option to attend an early college at N.C. State University with a focus on energy and sustainability.

High school fell short, national graduates say

If they could do it over, high school graduates from the class of 2010 said in a national survey this summer that they would have wanted to attend high schools that better prepared them for college and work.

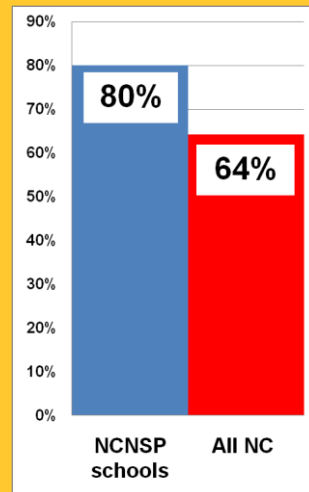
The [survey](#), released last week by the College Board, found that more than half the 1,500 students contacted said that doing well in college was more difficult than they expected, and a quarter of them were required to take remedial classes. Sixteen percent failed to complete their first year.

While many of the students said they wished they'd worked harder and gotten better grades, students said their schools fell short in several content and skill areas, including math, writing and giving students the confidence to set and achieve high goals.

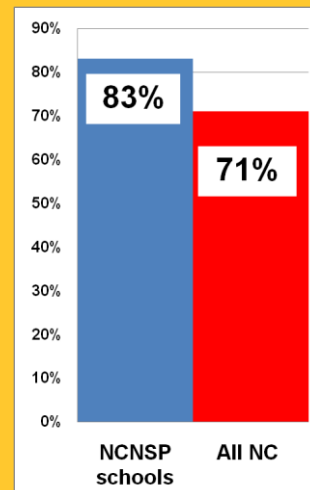
Only half the students reported that high school prepared them well for both college and work.

Four of every nine students would have taken different courses in high

Black male graduation rates



Low-income student graduation rates



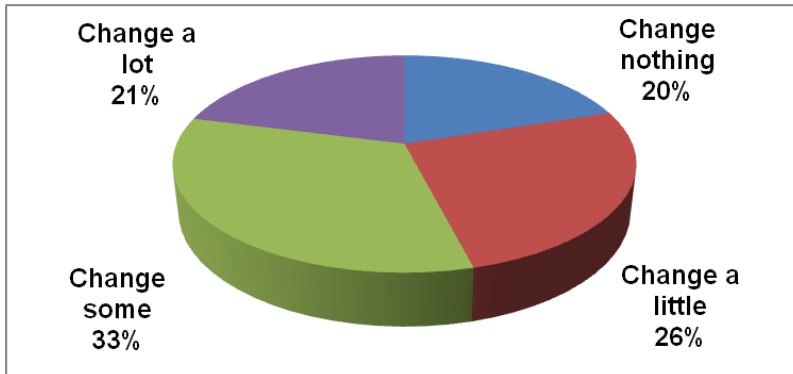
Meet an Innovator



Austin Obasohan is leading an ambitious effort in Duplin County to expand early college

school, particularly more math or more challenging math. Many of students surveyed also said they wished they had taken more science and courses that demanded more writing and research.

Most students said they would change something about their high school experience:



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opportunities to every high school student in the rural district.

That bold approach - only the second of its kind in the nation - reflects the district leader's commitment to high expectations for all students.

As superintendent of Duplin County Schools, Obasohan has no doubt that all children can learn and succeed. His dedication to nurturing that success has led him to partner with the North Carolina New Schools Project.

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More news about secondary school innovation ...

[Maine looks to North Carolina to learn from the state's leadership with early colleges ...](#)

North Carolina's early college high schools are seen by Maine Gov. Paul LePage as a model for consideration as his state looks to improve college readiness, the Washington Times reports.

[Schools can't keep preparing students for a world that no longer exists ...](#)

This online commentary from The New York Times finds that a new book about the relationship between education and digital media is a compelling manifesto for transforming teaching and learning.

[Math education must change to reflect the changing needs of 21st century careers ...](#)

Two math experts offer a prescription in this op-ed from The New York Times for changing math instruction in secondary schools to focus more directly on real-life problems and concrete applications.

[Durham's City of Medicine Academy relocates to a new building near Durham Regional Hospital ...](#)

Principal Elizabeth Shearer tells The News & Observer that the school will become a leader in helping high schools in Durham and around the state create a more effective science and math curriculum with a problem-solving, collaborative approach.

